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## NEWS RELEASE

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January 23, 2003

### **Fort Hancock Agents Discover Abandoned Marijuana Load**

*Alamogordo agents find 67 pounds of cocaine in late model Ford*

**EL PASO, Texas** ---U.S. Border Patrol agents in Fort Hancock, Texas used their tracking skills to seize 461 pounds of marijuana, while agents in Alamogordo, N. M., found 67 pounds of cocaine in a late model Ford this week in two separate incidents.

Fort Hancock agents seized the marijuana load at approximately 7:30 p.m. Wednesday after agents were alerted to several subjects walking north along the Rio Grande, five miles east of the Fort Hancock Port of Entry. When agents arrived at the location, they found muddy footprints. The trail led to a farmhouse area about 40 yards west of a house. A Border Patrol canine was dispatched to the location to assist in the search for possible contraband. The dog led agents to a bulldozer which hid several burlap bags filled with green leafy substance in cellophane bundles. The substance later tested positive for marijuana.

Agents believe the subjects crossed the river with the bags and dropped the load at that location when they suspected they were being pursued by Border Patrol Agents. The subjects absconded back to Mexico during the episode. The contraband was turned over to the El Paso office of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) for disposition.

In Alamogordo, agents on Tuesday found a cocaine load in a gas tank of 2001 Ford Excursion that had entered the Border Patrol checkpoint on New Mexico Highway 54. Unusual mannerisms by the driver and some fresh alterations to the undercarriage of the truck led agents to 32 separate bundles of white powdery substance in a metal compartment that was fed through a trap door. A Border Patrol canine confirmed the presence of the drug load in the vehicle.

The estimated value of the cocaine is \$2.1 million.

The five occupants of the truck, all border crossing card-holders from Mexico, were turned over to the Las Cruces Office of the DEA with the contraband and vehicle.

In Fiscal Year 2003 to date, Border Patrol Agents in the El Paso Sector have made 364 drug seizures, valued at \$53 million. Agents in Fort Hancock have made 17 seizures in Fiscal Year 2003, valued at \$4.9 million. Alamogordo agents have made 83 drug seizures, valued at 12.1 million in FY '03.

*\*\*Video and still photos of the contraband and vehicle are available to members of the press.*

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